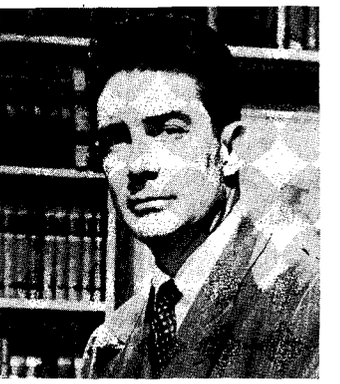
THE
Dan Smoot Report

Vol. 12, No. 52 (Broadcast 592) December 26, 1966 Dallas, Texas



DAN SMOOT

SOME TRUTH ABOUT THE WAR

In December, 1965, U. S. Representative William E. Minshall (Ohio Republican) visited Vietnam. He noticed much that disturbed him. Aboard the U.S.S. *Enterprise* (our only atomic powered aircraft carrier), he saw F-4 planes taking off for bombing missions carrying only 1000 pounds of bombs (four 250-pound bombs called Mk.81). These planes are capable of carrying 12,000 pounds of bombs, together with ample fuel. There is as much risk to personnel and aircraft carrying 1/12 of a load as if they were carrying a full load. If we are making 12 sorties over enemy territory to do the work that one sortie could do, obviously we are exposing our pilots and aircraft to 12-times as much danger as necessary; and we are grossly inflating the costs of our bombing operations.[1]

And there is even more to it than that. Most of the targets assigned our men are small — huts that may contain a squad of Viet Cong; foot bridges that are sometimes nothing more than a couple of trees felled across a stream; a single truck; a little boat on a river; a supply convoy that may consist of a pig and a water buffalo loaded with goods. To destroy, or even damage, such targets with a 250-pound bomb, our pilots must dive in dangerously low for a direct hit. If they were permitted to carry 750-pound bombs, they could make their runs at safer altitudes; and the targets would be destroyed by blast-damage, even if the bomb fell several yards away.[1]

Since February, 1965, we have lost 446 jets[2] — most of them from conventional ground fire, the kind that is effective *because* our planes must go in dangerously low for direct hits on relatively insignificant targets. The cost of these planes alone — not considering related costs and the irreplaceable loss of American lives — is many times greater than all the material harm our bombing has done the enemy.

Aboard the *Enterprise*, Representative Minshall talked to a young naval officer who had flown many missions against the Viet Cong and had an enviable record of efficiency, gallantry, and cour-

THE DAN SMOOT REPORT is published weekly by The Dan Smoot Report, Inc., Box 9538, Dallas, Texas 75214 (office at 6441 Gaston Ave.). Subscriptions: $18.00 for 2 years; $10.00, 1 year; $6.00, 6 months; first class, $12.50 a year; airmail, $14.50. Dan Smoot was born in Missouri, reared in Texas. With BA and MA degrees from SMU (1938 and 1940), he joined the Harvard faculty (1941) as a Teaching Fellow, doing graduate work in American civilization. From 1942 to 1951, he was an FBI agent; from 1951 to 1955, a commentator on national radio and television. In 1955, he started his present independent, free-enterprise business: publishing this REPORT and abbreviating it each week for radio and TV broadcasts available for commercial sponsorship by business firms.

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age. The young officer confirmed Minshall's observations, saying that our men and planes are being sacrificed on missions that cannot possibly cost the enemy as much as they cost us. He guessed that there are two main reasons for this: (1) Because of McNamara's mismanagement in the Pentagon, our pilots simply do not have the bombs and ordnance they need for the missions assigned them; (2) commanders, following orders of political publicists in Washington, send planes over enemy territory for the primary purpose of making newspaper copy about the large number of sorties flown against the Viet Cong.[1]

Minshall observed that our men do not have enough of the best planes that our industry is capable of supplying; and that there is a pilot shortage in Vietnam.

Back in Washington, Representative Minshall (who is on the House Department of Defense Appropriations Subcommittee) questioned Defense Secretary McNamara about the Vietnam war. McNamara told him:

"There is absolutely no substance whatsoever to the claim that the bombing is limited by shortages of planes, bombs, or pilots."[1]

In September, 1966, *Aviation Week & Space Technology* published a letter from an Air Force fighter-bomber pilot currently flying McDonnell F-4Cs in Vietnam. Here are excerpts:

"I am presently flying tactical fighters in South Vietnam, and it is time that the facts be given concerning our operations here . . . . The war here in Vietnam has become a political football, an exercise in glowing reports, outstanding new records, and promises of the 'turning tide.' . . .

"Newspaper readers in the U.S. often read of our terrific sortie rate, or of the tonnage of bombs dropped. None of the papers, however, have taken the time to equate tonnage per sortie . . . .

"There is nothing more demoralizing than the sight of an F-4 taxiing out with nothing but a pair of 81s or 82s nestled among its ejector racks [i.e., carrying 500 or 1000 pounds of bombs when it could carry 12,000 pounds] . . . .

"We come to the matter of targeting, the effective use of the available power. When an article reads 'structures destroyed' the definition means a straw-thatched hut. 'Boat' means anything from a 12-ft one-man dugout to slightly larger sampans. 'Bridge' means a bamboo footbridge or a pair of logs felled across a stream. 'Pack animal' means a water buffalo, cow or even a pig or goat . . . .

"We are using $300 napalm bombs, $305 Mk. 82s, $250 Mk. 81s, $2.45 20-mm. rounds, and much more expensive, newer ordnance. In addition, an F-4 uses 2,100 gal. of JP-4 per sortie, an F-100, 1,400 gal. Add to this the cost of every aircraft lost in the south, $2,500,000 per F-4, $800,000 per F-100, plus the cost of a pilot's life (not in the Christian sense, an irreplaceable asset), two years of training and a $500,000 investment, and then make another tally sheet . . . .

"The loss of one aircraft or one pilot negates many months' damage to the enemy . . . .

"Here in Vietnam, and in much of the rest of the Air Force, the true professional soldier is dissatisfied with his job . . . . leaving the service in ever-increasing numbers. They are tired of flying their aircraft for minimum effect . . . . They are sick of a military service that beat the best the German and Japanese armies could throw at them, today too timid to even . . . state that the 'people's choice' [President Johnson] is not necessarily a military leader in theater operations . . . .

"One of our former greats [General MacArthur], perhaps the best turned out in the modern U.S. military, [believed in] . . . carrying the battle to the enemy. He stated, 'From the Far East I send you one single thought, one sole idea, written in red on every beachhead from Australia to Tokyo. There is no substitute for victory.' "[1]

Still in the service, the author of this letter to *Aviation Week & Space Technology* had to remain anonymous. What he alleged was so similar to what Representative Minshall had observed and had heard that Minshall sent the article to the naval flyer he had met on the *Enterprise*. The officer replied. After he, like many other top men in the service, had retired to civilian life, Representative Minshall published his letter in the *Congressional Record*. The man's name is Norde Wilson. He was a lieutenant in the Navy. His letter to Minshall (October 11, 1966) has been widely reprinted. Here are excerpts:

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"Defense Secretary McNamara . . . emphatically and categorically [denies] . . . that there were any . . . shortages in the war zone. I was in the war zone, and there definitely was a bomb shortage . . . . Many times, we were launched on a combat mission with only four small (250#) bombs, when the F4B, the Navy's version of the 'Phantom', could carry twenty-four of these bombs. This was done for a higher sortie count. Many missions were launched into the darkness of night . . . . We were instructed to use flares to spot targets, none pre-briefed, or to bomb convoys whose headlights we might spot. These missions were flatly ineffective and, for the risk involved in dive bombing at night, into mountainous and unfamiliar terrain, should never have been flown. One such mission cost us the lives of our squadron skipper and his radar officer in December 1965, as they crashed into a mountainside pulling out of a dive: But it counted for another sortie . . . . These men . . . would much rather have lost their lives pulling off a bomb run on Phuc Yen airfield or the docks at Hai Phong or the Oil Dumps in Hanoi . . . . targets . . . worth the risk of lives and equipment. These are strategic targets that, if hit, could save the lives of many of our men in Vietnam. However, we read daily of Washington's concern over making enemies of the North Vietnamese populace — and world opinion. There was no voiced concern of the number of American lives being lost unnecessarily because of the indecisions and restraints being placed upon them, while the enemy continues at full force, killing in any way possible, without concern of world opinion . . . .

"I recall one mission of three aircraft on which we were directed to make three passes each, to destroy two small water wheels on a stream in the middle of nowhere. Ten million dollars in equipment and six highly skilled aviators, being utilized for a valueless target of this nature . . . . this statistic might be reported in the States as one irrigation plant destroyed . . . .

"The enemy in Hanoi capitalizes on our weak wills in Washington. We give them concessions that kill our soldiers . . . .

"The politics of it all has made [our fighting men] . . . sick, and the services are facing a critical shortage for good men. It will get worse! . . .

"The only solution is to fight . . . and get the job done . . . ."[1]

Lieutenant Wilson's widely publicized letter has prompted another ex-Naval flyer to speak for the record. Here are excerpts of an open letter, dated November 10, 1966, written to Lt. Wilson, by P. A. Williams, Commander USN (Retired), now living in Scottsdale, Arizona:

"[The armed forces] are subject to civil control and . . . this control has seeped down all the way to the tactical employment of weapons. This civil direction has, in the past 20 years . . . grown into a huge bureaucratic organization and, aided by modern communications, executes a measure of control over military power never before possible in man's history.

"But here's the problem: This civil control intellect firmly believes it is fighting a 'new' kind of war. This 'new' kind of war is called the 'graduated response'. It was born out of a computer to a certain extent and says that sooner or later by the controlled use of power in varying amounts, the enemy will come to the conference table. Note I did not say we would win, only that the liberal intellect desires very much to talk this thing over with the enemy . . . .

"Now this civil liberal intellect must be understood:

"A. He believes he can get along with the Communist world, somehow.

"B. He does not consider all Communists a threat to world peace.

"C. He believes that the Communists will respond in a rational manner, if so treated.

"From the preceding, it may be concluded that our civil superiors stand a good chance of misjudging the very nature of man. . . .

Evidently we have reached a stage of reasoning where it is believed that . . . a sworn and dedicated enemy [should not be forced to capitulate] . . . . The enemy believes in the exact opposite. This 'opposite' is called 'winning' or 'victory'; and this is what our Communist foe is dedicated to, be he Cuban, Arabic, Chinese or Russian.

"We appear also to be well into a program of accommodation with certain portions of the Communist world.

"We may also be heading straight for what our forefathers fought against — an all-powerful,

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centralized government relying on heavy taxation of its peoples to survive with all of its programs designed to help the people and 'perpetuate' its position of power.

"In conclusion, I suggest there is really no known substitute for strength and principles; that nation-greatness cannot be reduced to a computer formula; that man's basic lust for power is not diminishing; that centralized power will always corrupt; that unless the American people start thinking seriously about these things, history will surely record the Third World War (now in progress) as a victory for Communism over Freedom.

"The Communist revolution is not a revolution at all, but a well conceived plan to literally enslave the world. . . . The grey abstractions the liberal intellect hopes for are but ghosts.

"In facing reality, my suggestion is that we employ one of the most prized tools of the Communists — education. Education of the American people via as many media as possible to acquaint them of the *real problems*: Communism and centralized governmental control by an all-powerful elite.

"I believe there are a lot of Americans who are not ready to forget this country was founded on the principle of limited government . . . and maximized freedom of the individual under laws that put checks and balances on *both*. I cannot agree with those who say we must sacrifice our wealth in making over the world in our image by feeding, clothing and educating the less enterprising and aggressive peoples. . . .

"The record is clear. Since World War II, we have dealt with, appeased, begged, pleaded, bought off and otherwise conducted business with Communists only to see the threat grow larger and more imposing than ever. It cannot be proved that the Communists have in *any way* deviated from their chosen course of world revolution. This reality must be squarely faced by all free peoples before any real positive anti-communist actions can be taken that will begin the demise of an ideology that reduces man to a pawn in the hands of an all-powerful state."

As Commander Williams says, the solution is public education. That solution is not easy, with the liberal-left in control of most media of mass communication; but those who read publications which do tell the truth can help increase their circulation. Those who live in areas where there is no radio or television broadcast reporting the news from the viewpoint of constitutional conservatives can talk to businessmen about sponsoring such broadcasts.

The job can be done.

The job in Vietnam can be done, too. More on that next week.

CORRECTION

In the December 5, 1966 *Report*, Page 234, there is an error. The last sentence, first paragraph, second column, should read: "If no candidate for Vice President has a majority, the Senate elects from the two candidates with the most electoral votes."

FILM SALE

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FOOTNOTES

(1) "Vietnam," speech by U. S. Rep. William E. Minshall (R., Ohio), *Congressional Record* (daily), October 19, 1966, pp. 26726-30

(2) "Yank Planes Lost During Bomb Raids," by Jonathan Randal, *The Dallas Morning News*, December 16, 1966 p. A1

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